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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

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~ New Worm Exploits IE! ~ Forget Your Password? ~ Linux: User Friendly!
~ No to No Spam Services ~ DoS Attack On MS Site! ~ Wacky "Flash Mobs"!

-* AOL Changes Rollout Strategy *-
-* EU's Antitrust Proposals Cheered! *-
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, contrary to last year's weather patterns over the summer, there's not much of a chance that we'll have a drought this summer! I can't believe this weather that we've been stuck in for the past seven days! They call it a Bermuda Low. It's a low pressure system that just sucks moisture from the sky and moves it up the mid-Atlantic and keeps swirling it around us. And it's been stuck in this pattern. I keep saying it - it ain't the heat, it's the humidity! We've been getting patterns of sudden cloudbursts of rain, with a very rare glimpse of the sun. Thursday night, my wife was watching the news. Every five minutes or so, there were severe weather reports of rain, hail, and severe winds. The radar picture was ominous. Areas just south and west of us were getting hail and five inches of rain an hour! And, it was heading in our direction! Luckily, it died down a little and we only caught the fading edge of it; it poured for a few minutes and moved on. The lawn looks great - nice and lush and green. Too bad it hasn't been mowed in two weeks! The vegetable garden is doing great also. Such is life in New England!

Speaking of wacky weather, what's been hitting the state of California lately? Weird weather or something odd in the drinking water! With this latest spectacle of a so-called recall governor's election, I think it's high-time California fell into the Pacific Ocean and be done with it! What is it with these two-bit actors thinking that they have what it takes to be governor?!? And all of the rest of the kooks trying to get on the ballot?! Unbelievable!

Not much going on these days. I'm just getting back in to "serious" mode after ending my vacation this past Tuesday. I'll tell you, it's hard to get back into the swing of things! Anyway, let's get right into the thick of things with this week's issue.

Until next time...

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Cresus, beta 5

Bonjour :)

Download on my homepage <http://rajah.atari.org> or directly at
<http://membres.lycos.fr/nef/files/> -> cresusb5_uk.zip (~130 Kb)

If you use Cresus, make a backup before
If you do not know Cresus, it's a banks accounts manager.

New in the beta5 version:

- bug fixes:
 - cents amount approximation.
 - bad display if date transaction was modified.
 - etc.
- + left space in popups.
- + English translation fixes and help by Derryck CROKER
- + TT-RAM used if present.
- + editable fields for date can use the format for display.
- + date reverse order display for transactions (need relaunch of the program).
- + possible automatic save of the configuration when leaving.
- + if transaction is a transfer account, the amount is written in the target account (careful, writes are not linked, so delete of a transaction deletes NOT the one in the target account).
- + popup menu in transaction window: quick delete, check or uncheck enabled correlated with the (multi)selection of transactions.
- + transaction search functionality (on the opened account)
- + jobs: automatic transactions

Forgot in the text file, but present in this release:

- + auto incrementation of check number (from last transaction with check)
- + calendar (double-click on date field)

Greetings and thanks to:

- Olivier VANONI
- Cyril 'Bibou' LEFEBVRE
- Jean-Marc STOCKLAUSEN
- Derryck CROKER

Hope you'll be satisfied by our work :)

Rajah Lone and Daroou of Renaissance

<http://rajah.atari.org>

<http://perso.wanadoo.fr/daroou>

=~==~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, I'm using up my final week of summer vacation this week and, true to form, Mother Nature kicked me in the butt. It's been cloudy, rainy, and humid all week. Oh well. At least it ain't work.

I hope you don't mind, but I'd like to take a moment to give my opinion about what's going on around the country and around the world today.

First, let's take a look at what's happening in California. I probably should tell you that I'm not fond of California. I usually say that the only difference between California and yogurt is that yogurt has a healthy, active culture. <grin>

Okay, so California has massive money problems. The governor hasn't fixed the problem. Therefore the public (the political machine, actually) had what amounts to a no-confidence vote... without the vote. Hmmm... good thing that isn't happening in Florida, huh? Those folks wouldn't even have a ballot to mis-mark.

So now we have Arnold Schwarzenegger putting his hat in the ring. I've always had a lot of respect for "Ah-nuld". He started out as a body builder (yeah, like we had few enough of those that we had to import some more, right?), but long before he made money as Conan the Barbarian, or in Running Man or Total Recall or any of the other flicks he's been in, he made millions in real estate.

Now, I know just enough about real estate to know that you've either got to be very lucky or very good to make millions at it. Schwarzenegger was very probably both lucky and good. I can live with that. I'd be one of his biggest supporters, sitting there yelling "Go Arnold, go!"

But politics is another story all together. I've always been a little confused by the propensity of the general population to be swayed by the opinions of celebrities. It's one thing to have an actor hawking hair care products. It's another thing entirely when they throw their political opinions at us.

Celebrities are famous, by and large, because they are 'pretty' in one way or another (with the exception of William F. Buckley, of course... I STILL can't figure that one out), NOT because they are incredibly smart or insightful.

Call me silly, but I really don't CARE what Alec Baldwin thinks about California's economy. He's famous because he's 'pretty', not because he's smart. Now, I agree with most of what Baldwin says, but that's completely incidental.

Now, if Alan Greenspan were to become active in this thing, THAT would be a clear-cut choice. He's an economist... this is right up his alley. But it seems like a bad idea to elect an actor (no matter how intelligent and well-meaning) when the state is in the middle of its biggest financial crisis ever. It would be like sending your broken computer to a restaurant for repair. Their food and service may always be good, but do you really want them digging around in your computer?

To change direction a bit, let's think about the direction that politics in general is currently taking. The democrats are currently in the process of picking someone to run for president. There are, at the moment, a rather large handful of choices, and just who will be chosen to run when it's all over remains to be seen. I'll tell you flat-out that I'm a democrat... or at least that I tend to be more liberal than conservative... but that doesn't mean that I always 'tow the party line'. Even though one of the 'hopefuls' is a senator from my state, I don't see a clear-cut, hands-down, "best choice". I simply don't see any of

them as men (pardon the obvious gender bias) of vision. I see them as sort of technicians. We don't need another political engineer, we need someone with that industry and frugality trait while the other guy is complaining about mis-underestimating subliminal advertising and the French not having a word for entrepreneur.

Even though Franklin believed in the principles of industry and frugality, he had no problem with making donations to worthy causes. And at the time, there were no tax benefits to making donations. He didn't need a catchy phrase like "a thousand points of light" to sell the idea. He appealed to everyone's innate wish to do good, no matter how buried that trait may be.

I've always believed that the law and government should be a shield, not a sword; that the government is there, and is at its best when it concentrates on helping its constituents... the very individuals who cast votes to direct the course of the government. The Constitution says "We the people", not "We the corporations". I've seen bad things happen in all levels of government from local all the way up to the national level when the needs/wants of a business or special interest are put ahead of the needs/wants of the people themselves. While conservatives will argue that the economy works because of businesses doing what they do, it should be remembered that businesses do what they do for one reason: to make money. There's nothing wrong with that, but ascribing a higher purpose such as the common good or social equality or whatever is just plain wrong. Like amending 'The Patriot Act' to protect drug companies from litigation by families harmed by vaccination drugs. That's just pork. And to make it worse, whoever appended that clause to the act doesn't even have the intestinal fortitude to own up to it. The author or the amendment remains unknown.

One of my heroes has always been Benjamin Franklin. That's right, the "early to bed and early to rise" guy. He started out working in his brother's print shop, and ended up guiding the course of the nation by having input into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, not to mention having a hand in shaping the social, business, and community climates of the country. He instituted the first lending library, matching-fund grants, volunteer fire departments, and he shaped the postal service... all while running several business of his own and earning his reputation as scientist and inventor. Later on, he served the country as ambassador to France. It's is probably due to his influence that people like Rochambeau and Lafayette (names that are still spoken with reverence and respect in my home town, by the way) were dispatched to help a fledgling nation in its struggle for independence.

Franklin was of the opinion that there were two virtues that were most likely to lead one to success: Industry and Frugality. He would often cart rolls of paper to his shop in a wheelbarrow instead of having them delivered so that not only would he be active in the lowest level of his business, he would be SEEN to be industrious. He had no problem with self-promotion, as long as there was real substance behind it.

These two virtues of Franklin's are in very short supply in politics these days. What passes for industry is actually avarice. And what passes for frugality is actually selfishness steeped in contempt. The real problem is that we're starting to forget that there's a difference.

In closing, I'd like to make a prediction about what will happen in California. No matter who wins this recall election, the next governor will make a lot of noise about how things were allowed to get as bad as

they have gotten and, after about a year, they'll say that their plan would have worked just dandy, but the situation was actually worse than anyone had guessed. Tough decisions will be made, progress will come slowly and, as the economy strengthens, the situation will improve not by the deeds of the governor, but by the industry and frugality of the state legislature and the public itself. I admit that you don't have to be clairvoyant to make a prediction like this, but you don't have to be an actor either. <grin>

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info available from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Mark Duckworth asks about using Magxdesk with MiNT:

"This may be a fight starter but I was just wondering if anyone ever successfully ran Magxdesk under N.AES or XaAES. Reason being is that contrary to what others might say I have always loved magxdesk. To me it is clean, pretty and has the right features. I know there's a lot of sticking points with that so I was wondering if anyone ever accomplished it or even tried?"

Edward Baiz tells Mark:

"Yes, I tried it and it did not work mainly since Magxdesk is only for Magic. I use Jinnee 2.5 for Mint/NAES."

Jo Evan Skarstein adds:

"I haven't even tried! It will most definitely not work. MagXdesk use MagiC threads, these do not exist under any other AES."

I have to agree with you [about magxgesk]. A pity it's not a good AV-server. But it's small, fast and simple."

Last week, someone asked about using a ZIP drive on a Falcon thusly:

"What do you need to connect a Falcon and an Iomega zip drive?
I have the hardware including a scsi cable to go between them but what do I need in software? Did someone make an Iomega driver for the ST?"

This week Edward Baiz replies:

"You need HDDriver. I have it and it works great with my Iomega Jaz drive."

James Haslam agrees:

"Seconded. I've never had to use a termination block when I've used the Zip Drive as the last drive in the chain."

John Garone asks about upgrading HD Driver:

"Is it true that a hard drive (on a Hades) must be reformatted just to upgrade from HDDriver 7.01 to 7.8 ? It doesn't sound logical to me but that's what a Hades user told me!!!

If I remember correctly, whenever I upgraded, all I had to do was run

the new version and install with the corresponding utility app (8.04 now on my Falcon and an old 1 gig Seagate)!"

Edward Baiz tells John:

"That is not the case for me. I never had to reformat any new hard drive when I installed it. I also got a new 3 gig Seagate and it worked fine when I first loaded it up. The only thing I have had to reformat was one of my Jaz carts."

Dr. Uwe Seimet, author of HD Driver, adds:

"Even those do not have to be reformatted. As long as a medium is not corrupted partitioning is always sufficient. "

Edward tells Uwe:

"True, but in this case it was formatted for a MAC and I could not get it to work until I re-formatted it."

Uwe replies:

"Then you must have missed something. There is no special low-level format for the Mac or any other platform. The only difference are the file systems on the drive, which are created when partitioning. Partitioning will effectively overwrite the old file system structure, regardless of the platform it was created by.

Anyway, formatting does not harm, of course :-). Just takes time one can better spend with other things."

Peter West asks about changing the double-click speed on an ST:

"My wife has some health problems and finds it difficult at times to double-click fast enough on her 4 MB STFM for it to be recognized as a double-click. She is using the General CPX with the mouse d-c speed set to slowest, but it still isn't slow enough.

Is there a CPX or ACC that can be auto-loaded at boot-up that allows either setting the d-c interval even longer, or - better - to allow using the right button for double-clicking in all programs, including 1st Word Plus? (I know it's out of date, but she is used to it and it does all she needs). I can do the latter on my Falcon under MagiC and Thing, but she is running TOS 1.04 with the Atari desktop; this is quite sufficient for what she uses the machine for."

Dennis Vermeire tells Peter:

"Yep there is....

It's called WRAPMOUS, it's a CPX programmed by Richard Kurz in the early 90's. I'm left handed and thus like using the right button for double-clicking also. This little gem can also drive a PC mouse on the serial ports, let you use a joystick as alternative mouse, controls the d-c intervals and lots more..."

Maurits van de Kamp adds:

"I don't know about changing the mouse buttons, but you can adjust the

Peter tells Maurits:

"Rusty Nutt" adds:

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News      -   The Latest Gaming News!
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As opposed to the two other leading game consoles - Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2 and Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s GameCube - the Xbox's online functions are centralized, with Microsoft operating all the servers and

charging a subscription fee for access.

From Xbox Live's launch last November, Microsoft has emphasized the network's voice communication features, and the new game-independent voice chat was said to be one of users' most-requested features.

Microsoft also said Thursday that starting this fall, some of its games would be "Live Aware," meaning that they will not have online game play capabilities but players would still be able to sign in to the Live service and notify players when their friends come online.

More than 500,000 people worldwide have subscribed to Xbox Live, though some game publishers have been reluctant to make Xbox Live games, expressing concern about the revenue model and the control Microsoft would have over their customers.

Nintendo Plans New Game Product, Coy on Details

Game Boy creator Nintendo Co Ltd said on Thursday it will reveal details of a new game product next year but was coy on details, only saying it will be a surprise.

"We are preparing a new product which will be surprising and unique," President Satoru Iwata told a news conference on the videogame maker's business strategy.

Iwata, who took over in May last year from the charismatic Hiroshi Yamauchi, said a poor explanation about Nintendo's mid-term business strategy was partly to blame for a plunge in its share price after archrival Sony Corp unveiled plans to launch its own handheld game device, which will play music and movies, in 2004.

Still, Iwata said he could not give any specifics on the strategic product because of competitive reasons.

"Basically Sony's multi-function handheld device will not have a big impact on our business, but we are, whether Sony releases a new product or not, preparing for our future...and we'll be able to tell you specifics next spring," he said.

Asked if it would be a next-generation game console or software, Iwata declined to specify. It was also unclear when the product would go on sale.

Iwata said creating a unique and easily playable product would enable Nintendo to embark on a new growth path, but analysts said they were not so convinced.

"Iwata regretted the poor disclosure of the firm's mid-term business plan, but he still did not give any specifics. That was very typical of Nintendo," said Eiji Maeda, senior analyst at Daiwa Institute of Research.

"Overall, there was no surprise."

Some analysts suspect the new product could be some kind of peripheral which would boost the functions of its handheld Game Boy Advance console to stave off the challenge from Sony's new handheld, PSP.

Daiwa's Maeda said he would be impressed only if Nintendo came out with some kind of new product, such as hardware that combined handheld and home consoles, but he added that such a possibility was quite low.

CLintendo was developing a next-generation home videogame console and aimed to launch it in 2005 or 2006, in a bid to restore its clout in the lucrative videogame market. He did not elaborate on Thursday.

To revive slumping GameCube console demand, Iwata said Nintendo will strengthen its marketing by introducing a points system similar to frequent flier schemes for air travelers, in which consumers would accumulate points by buying its software.

"We'll begin the new program in Japan and the United States by the end of this year. We aim to have 300,000-500,000 users sign up for the program in the first year," he told reporters.

Customers who buy new games can register in the program, called "Club Nintendo," and accumulate points which can be used for items related to Nintendo's games.

Iwata also said the company plans to reinforce its software development by increasing collaborations with other software developers, but an acquisition of a third-party game maker would not fit into the company's strategy.

Kyoto-based Nintendo said earlier this week that it earned 11.45 billion yen in net profit for the latest quarter to end-June, powered by solid sales of its hand-held Game Boy Advance and its software, especially the latest Pokemon games.

Combined sales of "Pokemon Ruby" and "Pokemon Sapphire" have topped 9.5 million units worldwide and would surpass 10 million within this business year, Iwata said.

Microsoft, Ubi Soft File to Bid in 3DO Auction

Seven video game companies, including Microsoft Corp., Eidos Plc and Ubi Soft Entertainment, have qualified to bid in the auction for the assets of bankrupt publisher 3DO Co., according to court papers filed on Thursday.

In a notice filed with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in San Francisco, 3DO's attorneys said Microsoft, Eidos, Ubi Soft, JoWood Productions Software AG, Namco Hometek Inc., Turbine Entertainment Software Corp. and Crave Entertainment filed by Wednesday's deadline to bid in the Aug. 14 auction.

3DO filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on May 28 and said it would seek to sell its assets. The company had struggled with weak sales and repeatedly sought financing from its founder and chief executive, long-time video game industry executive Trip Hawkins.

The filing did not detail what assets the seven bidders were interested in, or what they were offering to pay.

Microsoft entered the console games business two years ago with its Xbox console, though it was in the PC games business for years beforehand. Britain's Eidos is best known for the "Tomb Raider" franchise, while the

French Ubi Soft has had success of late with its "Splinter Cell" action title.

Namco Hometek is a unit of Japan's Namco Ltd. and publishes games like "MotoGP" and "Soul Calibur." Turbine was behind the "Asheron's Call" online role-playing games. Germany's JoWood is known for titles like "AquaNox," while Crave publishes games like "UFC: Throwdown."

According to the court order approving the sales procedures, bidders were required to place deposits of anywhere from \$10,000 to \$100,000 to bid on the various asset groups, including the in-progress games "Street Racing Syndicate" and "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." Bidders interested in all of the assets as a group were required to deposit \$250,000.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft.com Suffers DoS Attack

Microsoft's main Web site was unreachable for almost two hours on Friday as the Web server it is hosted on failed following a denial of service attack, the company said Friday.

"I can confirm a DoS attack on the Microsoft.com Web site. It started at 1.21 p.m. Pacific time and lasted for roughly one hour and forty minutes," a Microsoft spokesperson said. "We have reported this to the appropriate federal law enforcement authorities and they are investigating this particular attack."

The denial of service attack was caused by "a malicious load of site requests," the spokesperson said, but Microsoft has yet not determined where the attack originated or who could be behind it. However, the company has determined that its site did not go down as a result of a software flaw, nor was a flaw in any Microsoft product involved in staging the attack, the spokesperson said. "This is not a Microsoft software issue," he said.

The attack hit only the Microsoft.com Web site, other Microsoft Web properties such as MSN, Hotmail, and MSNBC were not affected, the spokesperson said.

Microsoft's Web site is one of the most popular targets for attack on the Web and has suffered outages in the past. The company's site has also been attacked by exploiting unpatched software holes in Microsoft's own server software.

Microsoft did quite well fielding this attack, as sites typically go down for a longer period of time, according to Eric Siegel, principal Internet analyst at Web performance management services firm Keynote Systems in San Mateo, California.

"Usually DoS attacks are more catastrophic. Microsoft's performance in this attack was quite good," he said. "Microsoft has gotten better at fending off DoS attacks. I can see that the Microsoft systems were trying to recover. They were fighting. A couple of years ago these attacks were longer and the system would collapse completely."

Microsoft.com is part of Keynote's Business 40 index, which tracks performance and availability of what Keynote considers the 40 most important and well-connected business Web sites in the U.S. Data is collected from 25 major U.S. metropolitan areas and various Internet backbone providers.

Microsoft Warns About 'Worm' Virus

Microsoft Corp. is warning its customers about a computer worm that exploits a flaw in its Internet Explorer browser.

A security bulletin on the company's Web site says Microsoft started investigating a "mass mailer worm," dubbed W32/Mimail(at)MM, late Friday morning.

The worm spreads through e-mail if recipients open an attached zip file - used to condense information so it can move faster over the Internet - then open an HTML file inside the zip file, the bulletin said.

The worm exploits a vulnerability the company addressed in a security bulletin issued April 23, the bulletin said.

On Saturday, Microsoft spokesman Sean Sundwall downplayed the worm's potential to cause major security problems.

If someone opens the e-mail, the zip file and the HTML file, the virus is sent to all e-mail addresses the worm finds on that computer, Sundwall said.

"The damage is simply an annoying e-mail," Sundwall said.

Microsoft's Web site directs customers to a security patch designed to fix the problem.

Ante Up On Internet Sales

A system that will let states collect sales tax from online purchasers should become operational next year. More than enough state legislatures have passed laws this year to implement the Streamlined Sales Tax Project, Dianne Hardt, project co-chair and Wisconsin's tax administrator, said last week. Legislatures in 20 states, representing about a third of the population of the 41 states participating in the project, have enacted laws to conform with provisions of the tax-collection program. An agreement approved by the states' tax officials last year calls for execution of the sales-tax collection system once 10 states representing 20% of the population of sales-tax-collecting states approve the project.

Microsoft Competitors Cheer EU's Antitrust Proposals

Microsoft Corp.'s rivals on Wednesday cheered the hard line taken by the European Commission in a long-running antitrust case based on charges the company has continued to abuse the dominance of its Windows computer operating system.

Microsoft, which settled its antitrust trial with the U.S. government last year on less punitive terms, could be made to share software with competitors and could face possibly billions of dollars in fines when the European Union makes its final decision at a later date.

"It is revealing that a government outside the United States sees the social and economic benefits of competition," said Matthew Szulik, Chief Executive of Red Hat Inc. which distributes the free Linux operating system that competes with Microsoft's Windows.

"It's a far-reaching decision," Szulik said.

On Wednesday, the European Commission said it would order Redmond, Washington-based Microsoft to open up the protocols for its server software, which run the computers that host Web sites, manage e-mail and handle financial transactions.

Microsoft, which was given an opportunity to appeal before a final decision is made, said that it had already dealt with some of the commission's concerns in remedies in its U.S. antitrust case. Legal experts expect a settlement to the four-year-long case, possibly before the end of the year.

"We're not going to speculate on possible outcomes or the suggested remedies of the commission," said Microsoft spokesman Jim Desler.

Better access to Microsoft's server protocols would allow rivals such as Sun Microsystems Inc. and Linux developers create products that work as well as Windows does with Microsoft's servers.

"We are pleased with the European Commission's decision," said Lee Patch, Sun's vice president and counsel leading Sun's antitrust lawsuit against Microsoft.

Santa Clara, California-based Sun filed suit in March 2002 seeking more than \$1 billion in damages and claiming its business was damaged by Microsoft's abusive monopoly, which impeded the use of Sun's Java software platform.

Sun, which has cooperated with the European Commission's case against Microsoft, has complained that Microsoft had done little to curb its "monopolistic and anti-competitive practices."

The commission also said that it will force Microsoft to unbundle its Windows Media Player, used to play music and video on personal computers, or to include rival media player software with its Windows operating system.

RealNetworks Inc., which makes the biggest competitor to the Windows Media Player, said that the EC's proposal was the most significant part of the settlement.

"I think the EC has identified the importance of competition," said David Stewart, deputy general counsel at RealNetworks, "The EC has identified that they want to forward innovation and consumer choice...when there's competition, consumers win."

Steve Kleynhans, a Meta Group analyst, said it was likely that Microsoft would agree to removing the media player.

"They'll bite the bullet and do it," Kleynhans said.

Analysts were reluctant to speculate on the size of the commission's fine, which would be capped at 10 percent of Microsoft's annual revenues, or roughly equal to \$3 billion.

Even if the commission were to impose the maximum fine, which is seen as unlikely, it would only make a small dent in Microsoft's \$49 billion cash hoard.

ISP Answers RIAA Subpoena With Suit

The music industry's quest for ISPs to release names of customers who allegedly download music files is hitting a backlash: A senator is challenging the practice and a second major ISP has filed suit.

Senator Norm Coleman, a Minnesota Republican, recently expressed concerns about what he calls a "shotgun" approach by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in protecting its copyrights. The organization has filed a number of administrative subpoenas authorized by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). And last week, Pacific Bell Internet Services, a subsidiary of SBC Communications, filed a lawsuit against the RIAA and two other organizations after Pacific Bell received more than 200 subpoenas asking for the identities of its customers.

The RIAA responded by statement to both actions, saying it will comply with Coleman's request for information on the subpoenas. That response will confirm the RIAA is acting within the law, the RIAA says.

The information "will demonstrate that our enforcement program, one part of a multi-pronged strategy, is an appropriate and measured response to the very serious problem of blatant copyright infringement confronting the entire music community," according to the RIAA's statement.

The DMCA lets copyright holders subpoena ISPs for the names of people they believe are using their copyrighted material without permission. These subpoenas are issued by a court clerk without a judge's action, but Pacific Bell and other critics have suggested the subpoenas could be abused by anyone claiming to be a copyright holder, including criminals.

"We really believe that anyone who can take the time to fill out a form letter can get it stamped by the court clerk and get the name of an Internet user," said Larry Meyer, a SBC spokesperson. "The potential for abuse is very great."

For the past year, Verizon Internet Services has fought two RIAA subpoenas, and lost in court twice. Verizon released the names of the alleged downloaders in early June, but promises to keep fighting the DMCA

subpoenas.

Pacific Bell's suit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, asks the subpoenas be declared invalid, according to Meyer. The company filed the lawsuit last week because several of the RIAA subpoenas named a deadline for compliance last week, he said.

Pacific Bell is also fighting demands from copyright infringement tracker MediaForce, and a subpoena from adult-themed entertainment company Titan Media. MediaForce is demanding Pacific Bell cancel the subscriptions of "thousands" of its customers, and Titan Media wants the names of 50 Pacific Bell customers.

The MediaForce demands suggest the ISP should cancel customer accounts on "their word alone," Meyer said. "This lawsuit is about protecting the privacy rights of our customers," he added.

The RIAA called Pacific Bell's arguments against the subpoenas "old news." The telecom company is "recycling many of the same arguments" already rejected in the Verizon case, according to the RIAA.

"It's unfortunate that they have chosen to litigate this, unlike every other ISP which has complied with their obligations under the law," an RIAA statement says. "We had previously reached out to SBC to discuss this matter, but had been rebuked. This procedural gambit will not ultimately change the underlying fact that when individuals engage in copyright infringement on the Internet, they are not anonymous and service providers must reveal who they are."

Meanwhile, Coleman, chairman of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, wrote to the RIAA. He is asking for a copy of all its DMCA subpoenas, a description of the methodology the RIAA uses to find evidence of illegal file-sharing, and other information.

Coleman says in a statement that he does not support illegal file-trading, but suggests there may be a "more circumspect and narrowly tailored method" for the RIAA to go after file downloaders.

"The industry seems to have adopted a shotgun approach that could potentially cause injury and harm to innocent people who may have simply been victims of circumstance, or possessing a lack of knowledge of the rules related to digital sharing of files," Coleman says in a statement. "The RIAA subpoenas have snared unsuspecting grandparents whose grandchildren have used their personal computers, individuals whose roommates have shared their computers, as well as colleges and universities across the United States."

Forget Your Password?

The majority of users mishandle their passwords and user IDs, forget their passwords on a regular basis and then resort to calling their IT departments for help when they can't log on to their PCs, according to a new survey.

The results of the study, done by security vendor Rainbow Technologies Inc. and released Tuesday, should come as no surprise to anyone in the IT world. Most enterprise IT workers are painfully familiar with the poor security

habits of the users they support. However, the extent to which users drop the ball and endanger their corporate networks is nonetheless disconcerting.

"It surprised me how aware people were of how weak passwords are, and yet they continue to rely on them," said Bernie Cowens, vice president of security services at Rainbow. "You can see that they are really no security at all. Passwords are a real problem, but we continue to keep our heads in the sand and our fingers crossed."

In a survey of 3,000 administrators, managers and security specialists, Rainbow found that 55 percent of users write their passwords down at least once and that nine percent write down every password at some point. Even worse, 40 percent of the respondents said their users share passwords with co-workers or other people.

The survey also found that some of the security measures that companies have put in place to strengthen passwords have actually backfired. A common corporate policy is to require users to select passwords that either include both letters and numbers or are simply a string of letters that don't form a word. The idea is to defeat so-called dictionary attacks, which use automated tools to try thousands of words until one matches the user's password.

However, 80 percent of respondents to the survey said that this policy has in fact increased the likelihood that users will either write down or forget their passwords.

"It was clear from the survey that while the implementation of password strengthening methods may make IT and business managers feel better about the use of passwords, they may not result in stronger actual security," the company said in its introduction to the survey results. "In fact the security may be weaker, which represents a fundamental flaw in the password paradigm."

But not all of the blame for the poor state of password management should fall to users. Rainbow, based in Irvine, Calif., also found that almost 20 percent of respondents are not required to change their passwords on a regular basis and only 38 percent have to switch passwords five or more times each year.

"This is a very poor security policy to start with. Obviously, people recognize today the weaknesses of passwords. It's hard to fathom that some organizations don't require [password changes] at all," Cowens said.

'Do Not Spam' Lists Find Customers, Skeptics

Frustrated Internet users inundated with unwanted get-rich-quick schemes and herbal Viagra offers may have noticed a new, unsolicited pitch promising to reduce the amount of "spam" e-mail they receive.

Pointing to Web sites with names like remove.org and globalremoval.com, the messages promise - for a nominal fee - to stop spam at its source by placing their addresses on a "do not spam" registry.

The services say they have hit on a novel and cheap way to reduce spam, and point to bulging customer lists as proof. Government and private-sector

experts say such "do not spam" services are not likely to work because marketing firms are under no obligation to comply.

"It's probably not worth signing up. You can get plenty of spam for free," said Howard Beales, head of the Federal Trade Commission's consumer-protection division.

Ironically, many of the do-not-spam services may have been inspired by an FTC initiative - the telephone "do not call" list that promises to keep most telemarketers at bay, starting in October.

The popularity of the anti-telemarketing list and the success of similar state-level programs have prompted some to call for a "do not spam" list.

The FTC and many technology experts say a government-backed "do not spam" list would do little good, as spammers, unlike telemarketers, often cloak their identities and thus could easily escape punishment. Also, some marketers might view the list as a tempting trove of valid e-mail addresses to sell to other spammers.

While prospects for a federal do-not-spam list look doubtful, private companies have stepped in to offer their own services, often through unsolicited messages of their own.

Remove.org promises to rid members' inboxes of spam and protect their children from unwanted pornography for \$9.95 per year.

The company seeks to cut off Internet marketers who send unsolicited messages to the list's 50,000 members by notifying their Internet providers that the spammer may be violating their service contract, Remove.org marketing director Charles David said.

Internet marketers who do not wish to generate consumer complaints or send pornography to children can scrub their master lists of members' e-mail addresses, he said - a key consideration as public anti-spam sentiment mounts.

"I think they really see their days as potentially numbered, and the current climate's given us that extra leverage," David said.

Another service, globalremoval.org, deputizes Internet marketers to seek out those who are sick of spam. Consumers pay \$5 for a lifetime membership and the marketers get \$1 for each Internet user they sign up. The list is encrypted to keep it out of spammers' hands, and those who participate sign a contract to be held accountable.

Company founder Tom Jackson said the system had proved its appeal, saying "tens of thousands" had signed up in recent weeks, some in response to globalremoval.org's own e-mail campaign.

"If that message upsets people, then I say 'Either sign up with us or pretend it was one more Viagra ad and get back to your spam diet, and we're really sorry to have bothered you,'" Jackson said.

Several industry and technology experts say do-not-spam lists are unlikely to succeed without a federal law.

"To the best of my knowledge, these private remove services are nothing but scams," said Dave Brussin, chief technology officer of the ePrivacy Group, which wants Congress to pass a national list.

Computer-security consultant Richard M. Smith says working with spammers to cut spam is a conflict of interest. "Doesn't pass my smell test," he said.

"The whole concept is a little fishy," said Louis Mastria, a spokesman for the Direct Marketing Association, which represents many Internet marketers. "They have no power over these guys, so there's no real service that they can guarantee or provide.

"You've spent your \$10 and what do you get out of it?"

AOL Launches Advanced E-mail, Messaging Product

America Online on Tuesday launched stand-alone, advanced e-mail and instant messaging software as the AOL Time Warner Inc. unit tries to offer more choice in hopes of stemming subscriber defections.

The product launch comes as America Online also rolls out the latest version of its Internet service, AOL 9.0 Optimized, and as it tries to curtail the sharp decline in its dial-up subscriber base while trying to woo high-speed users.

The company said the stand-alone product, AOL Communicator, can consolidate e-mail from multiple accounts into a single application and offers more flexible e-mail management and better spam filters. It will be free to AOL subscribers.

The release comes at a time America Online faces federal probes into its accounting of advertising deals, questions about discounted bulk sales of Internet subscriptions to its marketing partners in 2001 and concerns about its shrinking dial-up subscriber base.

The SEC recently requested documents related to the bulk deals, a person close to the company said last week.

Analysts have been encouraged by early peeks at AOL 9.0, calling it one of the biggest changes in the service in years and a step in the right direction, but they said it is unlikely to be enough to offset the company's near-term woes.

AOL Changes Strategy On Software Rollout

America Online is abandoning its strategy of making major changes to its AOL software as part of a single annual release in favor of rolling out fresh upgrades as soon as the new features are ready, company officials said this week.

The change comes as AOL Time Warner Inc. seeks to stem the exodus of subscribers to low-price competitors or to cable and phone firms providing high-speed online access. By offering a steady stream of new improvements, company officials hope to keep their subscribers interested in the service and around longer.

Over the past week, America Online began making AOL 9.0 Optimized available

for download by high-speed subscribers. It is the third major software release by the Dulles-based firm in 10 months.

"We are on a faster innovation cycle, and we get the product out the door first to our members," said AOL spokesman Jim Whitney. "There is a real commitment to innovating and constantly improving the product. If you look at AOL today versus a year ago, this is different."

During a recent demonstration of the firm's newest offering, AOL 9.0, Executive Vice President David Gang emphasized a variety of new features in the company's signature online software, particularly fresh ways to handle e-mail.

The firm, which released AOL 8.0 in October 2002, and 8.0 Plus this March, is making AOL 9.0 available now, even though it works only with computers running Windows 2000 or Windows XP, via high-speed connections. A more complete version of the software to be released this fall will work with both dial-up and high-speed connections, and also run on Windows 98 and other operating systems.

One major new feature of AOL 9.0 - software to create blogs, the increasingly popular electronic diaries written by individuals and shared with others online - is not part of the AOL 9.0 released to subscribers thus far. That feature is still being refined and will be distributed to subscribers soon and to the public within a few months.

In addition to improving e-mail management, Gang, who oversaw development of AOL 9.0, said other enhancements include more sophisticated spam filtering; new ways to personalize the company's instant-messaging software, including use of animated icons; and an interactive welcome screen that can be tailored to individual interests.

Other new instant-messaging features include a photo-sharing service and the potential to engage in real-time conversations with other users around the world, provided subscribers have a PC microphone.

While the majority of AOL's roughly 25 million subscribers pay \$23.90 a month for dial-up access, the portion of the business that is growing, and that is receiving the greatest management focus, is AOL for Broadband.

The broadband service, which offers users more features by taking advantage of faster connection speeds, runs in conjunction with the access provided by cable and telephone providers. This week, the firm formally released AOL Communicator to its online subscribers, a companion piece of software that gives users even greater control over their e-mail, such as the ability to check multiple accounts, even if they are not AOL ones.

"Many AOL members, especially those using the AOL for Broadband service, have expressed great interest in using more advanced e-mail features," Gang said. "For 'power' mail users, AOL Communicator [combines] powerful e-mail, instant messaging, personalized and up-to-the-minute news and content, and the hallmark ease of use AOL members have come to expect."

Other new features that are part of AOL 9.0 include shared family calendars; a new AOL cash card that will allow children and teens (with their parents' permission) to shop within designated areas of AOL and at stores; online storage options for e-mail that do not take up space on a computer's hard drive; improved firewall and virus protection; new parental controls; and a beefed-up "Kids Only" area.

Linux Advocates Mount Attack Against SCO

In the high-stakes legal showdown between Linux users and SCO Group Inc. over whether that company is owed unprecedented license fees, advocates for the free software on Thursday showed no signs of blinking at their biggest annual gathering.

SCO, which claims its blueprint for Unix software is embedded illegally in versions of the free Linux operating system, is suing International Business Machines Corp. for billions and has threatened companies that they must pay to use Linux or face litigation.

But IBM and Linux distributor Red Hat Inc. fought back this week against London, Utah-based SCO with countersuits, drawing cheers from Linux developers and users gathered in San Francisco this week for LinuxWorld.

"I'm not going to pay up until they show me proof," said Sterling Ball, who runs Ernie Ball, maker of the popular "Slinky" electric guitar strings. Ball switched to Linux and Sun Microsystems Inc.'s products several years ago after a license audit by Microsoft Corp.

Linux, which can be copied and modified freely, has gained ground against Microsoft Windows as a software standard for servers used to run the Internet, handle financial transactions and even manage the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

Many are drawn to Linux's open-source credo, which ensures that anyone can access, copy and modify its underlying source code, or software blueprint. A network of developers, hackers and users say the collaborative spirit behind Linux makes it more reliable and innovative than proprietary software.

"Is there any basis for this suit? No," said Frederick Berenstein, Co-Chairman of Xandros, a distributor of Linux desktop software. "Is it designed to keep SCO in business? Yes."

SCO, which had been struggling financially until launching its legal and licensing campaign in March, said this week it will charge \$699 for a computer with a single central processor running Linux, a price set to double at the end of an introductory period ending October 15.

Red Hat, the leading distributor providing Linux update and support services, filed a formal complaint earlier this week claiming that SCO's claims threaten to harm its business.

SuSE Linux AG, a German distributor and Red Hat competitor, said that it was looking for ways to support Red Hat, an offer welcomed by Red Hat Chief Executive Matthew Szulik.

IBM countersued on Thursday, saying that SCO had infringed on four IBM patents and breached the Linux general public license.

SCO, for its part, has said that it had been approached by Linux users seeking licenses to avoid any potential liability. Microsoft, whose server software competes directly with Linux, has signed a multimillion dollar licensing deal with SCO.

"SCO will remain on course to require customers to license infringing Linux implementations as a condition of further use," SCO said in a statement, "This is the best and clearest course for customers to minimize Linux problems."

But many remain reluctant to pay up until SCO proves that Linux contains proprietary software code. SCO has offered to show any interested parties its code under a non-disclosure agreement so that Linux can't be modified to remove any incriminating software code.

"I think a lot of people realize its a bluster up to this point," said Ian Murdock, Chairman of Progeny, which creates customized versions of Linux for companies, "If they were to come out with compelling evidence, then people could consider it seriously."

Linux Earns User-Friendly Rating

Linux, once viewed as an operating system only computer geeks could appreciate, is today a much more user-friendly software that companies, public administrations, and consumers can master almost as easily as Microsoft's Windows XP. That's the core finding of a study published on Friday by Relevantive, a Berlin-based company specializing in consulting companies on the usability of software and Web services.

The Relevantive usability study, which can be downloaded from the company's Web site, comes as numerous government bodies and companies in Germany's public and private sectors move to migrate their IT systems away from Windows to the Linux operating system, while others are still debating the pros and cons of such a move.

The independent study focuses on the use of Linux in companies and public administrations, using SuSE Linux AG's Linux Professional 8.2 OS software with the KDE 3.1.2 graphical interface.

The researchers studied how easily two groups of users could perform tasks using the different operating systems. One group consisted of 60 users between 25 and 55 with computer skills but no prior experience with Linux or Windows XP. They tested the pre-configured open source software according to various criteria, such as the ease of creating and administrating new and existing files, copying CDs, and performing some basic office tasks, such as composing a text and sending an e-mail.

The other group consisted of 20 users with the same qualifications who performed the exact same tasks on Windows XP.

The study findings suggest that it is almost as easy to perform most major office tasks using Linux as it is using Windows, which has a long history in the consumer market.

Linux users, for example, needed 44.5 minutes to perform a set of tasks, compared to 41.2 minutes required by the XP users. Furthermore, 80 percent of the Linux users believed that they needed only one week to become as competent with the new system as with their existing one, compared to 85 percent of the XP users.

But when it comes to the design of the desktop interface and programs, Windows XP still has a strong edge: 83 percent of the Linux users said they

liked the design of the desktop and the programs, compared to 100 percent of the Windows XP users.

'Flash Mobs' Stage Wacky Public Stunts

About 200 people, mostly in their 20s and 30s, crowd into the card section of the Harvard Coop bookstore, pretending to look for a card for "Bill."

On cue, they burst into spontaneous applause.

It's another "flash mob" strike, wherein a crowd, organized by e-mail lists and Web sites, converges in pre-arranged location and performs a wacky, harmless stunt for a few minutes in public.

The crowd then abruptly disappears, leaving bystanders befuddled.

Some participants consider these acts of swarming to be art. Others fancy them social revolution. But for many it's just irreverent, silly fun.

The phenomenon, called smart flocking by some, is spreading across the globe along with the portable digital devices that enable it.

After the original flash mob coalesced in Manhattan less than two months ago, similar 21st century be-ins were staged from Minneapolis to Tokyo to Vienna.

In June, flash-mobbers crowded into a Manhattan Macy's and surrounded a large oriental rug, telling puzzled salespeople they all lived together and wanted the \$10,000 "Love Rug."

In Rome, hundreds flooded a bookstore, asking employees for imaginary books and authors.

In San Francisco, a flock crossed a busy downtown crosswalk back and forth, waving their arms in the air and spinning in circles, as tourists stared agape.

The Cambridge crowd fascinated Melissa Krodzman, a 24-year-old mobber.

"But to get the joke, you had to look at the woman there behind the counter, the expression on her face" when the crowd materialized out of nowhere, Krodzman said.

A flash mob is a lighthearted variation of the "smart mob" - people who use digital technology to hastily mobilize, as activists did to protest the U.S. invasion of Iraq or cell phone-equipped teenagers simply do to organize their evening on the spur of the moment.

Futurist Howard Rheingold unwittingly inspired the flash-mobbers, with his 2002 book "Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution," which examines how technology redefines social interaction.

Often, anonymous flash mob organizers send out e-mails and post on online "blogs" specifying a date and time for swarming. Word spreads quickly. And before you know it, hundreds are in New York's Central Park, making bird sounds.

"Everything makes a lot of sense nowadays, a bit too much sense. Then, for 10 minutes, you get to do something completely nonsensical. You get to be a kid for a few minutes," said a 30-year-old organizer of the San Francisco mob, who wanted to be known only as "The Governor."

Even friends who got his mob "summonses" didn't know he was the organizer, he says - and that secrecy is part of what has people hooked.

Only organizers know the details. Participants are told to synchronize their watches and gather in nearby bars, organized in clusters according to their birth month.

Volunteers, who get cues only minutes prior by cell phone, hand out slips of paper with instructions - the precise minute when the mob should appear and disappear.

The slips must be hidden after memorizing instructions and everyone must disperse no later than two minutes after it ends.

"It's all very 'spy novel,' very hush-hush," said 34-year-old New York City flash-mobber Fred Hoysted.

Numerous web logs (blogs), chat rooms and Yahoo group lists are devoted to the movement.

As soon as San Francisco blogger Sean Savage started recording flash mob events on his Web site - www.cheesebikini.com - traffic skyrocketed from 350 visitors a day to more than 9,000, he said.

A recent mention on the popular techie site, Slashdot.org, brought even more traffic, crashing Savage's server.

Savage, 31, says the phenomenon empowers citizens in a world controlled by "Big Government and Big Corporation."

"This interests people - even if it's frivolous, totally for fun, and doesn't have a label attached to it - because they see something can still happen from the grassroots without any help from the government and corporations," said Savage, a computer system designer and analyst at Stanford University.

Rob Zazueta, who is creating an online meeting place - FlockSmart.com - for organizers and wannabe participants, says the practice turns on its head arguments that evolving digital communications tools like text messaging or e-mail are depersonalizing.

"With smart mobs, these same tools that used to push us apart, are now bringing us back together," he said.

Zazueta, 28, hopes to see more instant physical gatherings - not of anonymous pranksters but rather of like minds. They could be at a coffee shop to discuss anything from technology, to music to politics.

"It takes the concept of chat rooms," he said, "and brings it into the real world."

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